

## **1 INTRODUCTION**

### **PROJECT BACKGROUND**

As cities and towns develop through time, each generation leaves its physical imprint on the community. The results are periods of various architectural styles, building types, street patterns, and open spaces. These neighborhoods and commercial areas become more distinctive and more valued as they survive subsequent generations of development. At some point, the best of these are recognized by the community as having architectural, historic, and cultural significance. Through local government policy they are designated as historic districts and often architectural review boards are established to protect and reinforce the distinctive character of these areas.

In January of 1976, the City Council of Lynchburg created a Board of Historic and Architectural Review as a part of historic district legislation within the overall zoning ordinance of the City. Since that time, various individual structures, one commercial area, and four residential neighborhoods (Daniel's Hill, Diamond Hill, Federal Hill, and Garland Hill) have been designated as historic districts within the City. Generally, under this legislation any new construction, demolition, or exterior change to an existing building within these districts must be reviewed and approved by the Board of Historic and Architectural Review before a building permit can be issued.

In an effort to provide more detailed guidance for the building owner and the Board of Historic and Architectural Review, the City of Lynchburg

contracted with Frazier Associates of Staunton, Virginia and Okerlund Associates of Charlottesville, Virginia in March 1986 to prepare design guidelines for Lynchburg's four historic districts as well as for the central business district. The first phase of this project was "Report One: Historic Areas Design Guidelines of Other Virginia Cities and Towns," which was a background study to this report.

The second phase of this project was "Report Two: Historic District Profiles," much of which has been incorporated into this publication. These profiles include an historical summary of each district; a general description of each area and any sub-districts; a description of the existing architectural character; a summary of any current rehabilitation problems that were observed in each district; and a summary description of the significant streetscape elements.

This design guidelines report of the four residential historic districts is the third phase of this project. (A companion report contains design guidelines for the downtown area.) Guidelines are included for rehabilitation, new construction, moving buildings, demolishing buildings, public streetscape elements, and private site elements. In addition, an illustrated guide to the most common historical architectural styles of the neighborhoods has been included.

### **WHAT DESIGN GUIDELINES CAN AND CANNOT DO FOR A COMMUNITY**

Most historic district ordinances have written criteria that the architectural review board uses in determining if a project is appropriate for the historic district. These criteria are usually a simple list of design elements or general statements about insuring the design of the project relates to the existing character of the area. It is left for the property owners to interpret these criteria as they design their projects.

Well written and clearly illustrated design guidelines can:

- give more detailed guidance to property owners contemplating changes or additions to their building or lot;
- assist the architectural review board by providing them with minimum standards to guide their decision making;
- result in more appropriate changes which reinforce the distinctive character of the districts;
- help identify and resolve specific design concerns frequently raised in the district;
- assist the entire local building industry, including architects, contractors, and suppliers, as well as city officials such as building inspectors and public works officials to understand the nature of these historic areas and how to reinforce their special character;

- speed the review and approval process of routine alterations;
- potentially improve the design quality of future developments and growth within the districts;
- protect current property values and public investment in the districts by discouraging poorly designed and inappropriate projects; and
- increase the overall public awareness of the unique character of the historic districts.

Design guidelines cannot:

- increase rehabilitation activities or improve maintenance of existing buildings in the historic districts. They do not encourage these activities or provide incentives by themselves, but only provide guidance if the building owner decides to undertake a project;
- regulate the amount or location of growth and development within the districts;
- regulate the interior design of projects within the districts;
- absolutely insure the highest quality design in every instance. The philosophy of design guidelines are to assist property owners, not to dictate to them. Therefore, guidelines that are flexible enough to allow a certain level of decision-making by the property owner will be easier to administer and more widely accepted by the public.

This factor is very important in new construction guidelines when overly specific criteria can stifle architectural creativity and often result in mediocre designs.

### Special Notes

The guidelines of this publication encompass recommendations only, and the Board of Historic and Architectural Review shall not approve or reject a request for a Certificate of Appropriateness based solely on the recommendations of the guidelines. The Board may study other alternatives and circumstances as well when reviewing a request.

It is highly recommended that building owners seek the expertise of a qualified architect when making complicated renovation and restoration decisions. This assistance can be very valuable if the rehabilitation involves an income producing property and the building owner is applying for federal tax incentives for the project.